

After 638 Assassination Attempts: Fidel Castro Celebrates 90th Birthday

By [RT](#)

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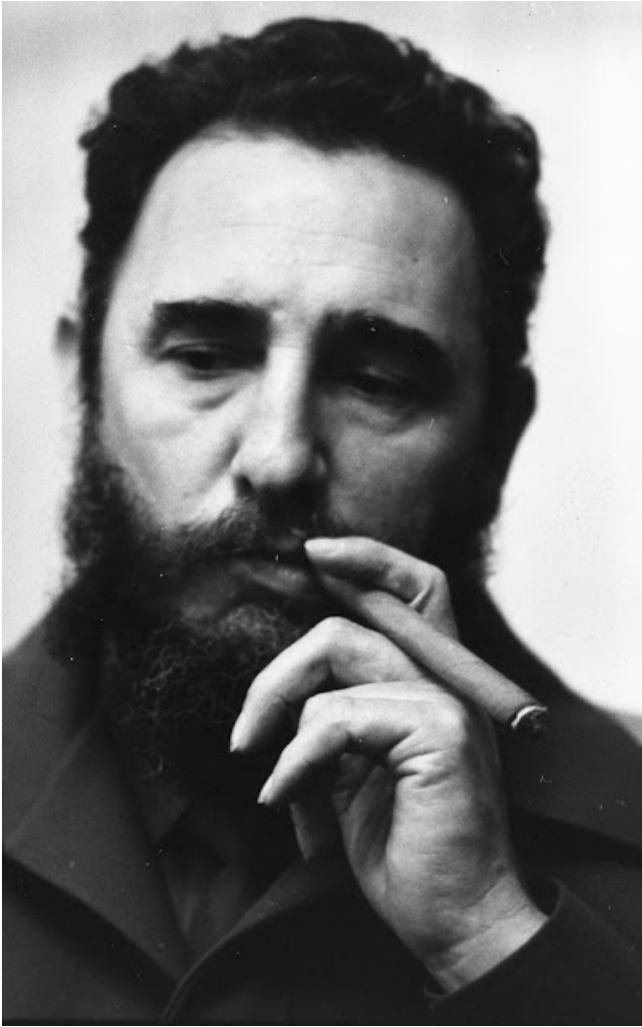
Today, Cuban leader Fidel Castro is celebrating his 90th birthday. Although there are almost no blank spots in Castro's biography, some facts of his life might have been forgotten. RT has decided to remember them.

Castro was always distinguished by his charisma, a feature which allowed him not only to implement a number of cardinal reforms in Cuba and bring the country to new heights in the fields of education, medicine, and tourism, but also make it into the Guinness Book of World Records, become a blogger, and even a hero in computer games.

Cigars and the beard

Many remember Fidel Castro for his beard and cigar. El Comandante was always proud of his beard and said that he would shave it only when the revolution finally triumphs.

"I don't waste my time shaving. This would take about 15 minutes every day. This way, I can save a few days a year for important matters," he once stated.



Castro always loved Havana cigars, so much that there was once an attempt to poison him through them. In 1986, however, the leader of the revolution had to give up this pernicious habit because of health problems. "The best thing you can do with a box of cigars is give them to the enemy," he said then.

New Cuba

In the early 1960's, the leader of the Island of Freedom ordered that all educational institutions be nationalized and a unified state education system be established. In 1961, 10 thousand schools were built. By 1995, the country's literacy rate was 95%.

Following the revolution in 1959, the medical education system was reorganized. Cuba now has the lowest infant mortality rate on the entire American continent with the exception of Canada. Medical care on the island is now free.

Between 1989-1994, the reallocation of resources in the country led to the rapid growth of tourism, a sector of the economy which now brings in an average of \$2 billion a year.

Guinness Book of World Records

On September 26th, 1960, Fidel Castro delivered a speech at the UN including the words "When the philosophy of plunder disappears, so will the philosophy of war." In his speech, he explained the meaning of the Cuban Revolution and the essence of its reforms. His speech lasted 4 hours and 29 minutes, thus entering into the Guinness Book of World

Records as the longest speech ever delivered at the UN.

However, according to other sources, Castro's longest speech ever delivered was at the Third congress of the Cuban Communist Party in 1986, lasting 7 hours and 10 minutes.

In addition, Castro became a record-breaker for having survived 638 different assassination attempts. The majority of them, moreover, were characterized by extraordinary ingenuity, resembling scenes from James Bond films.

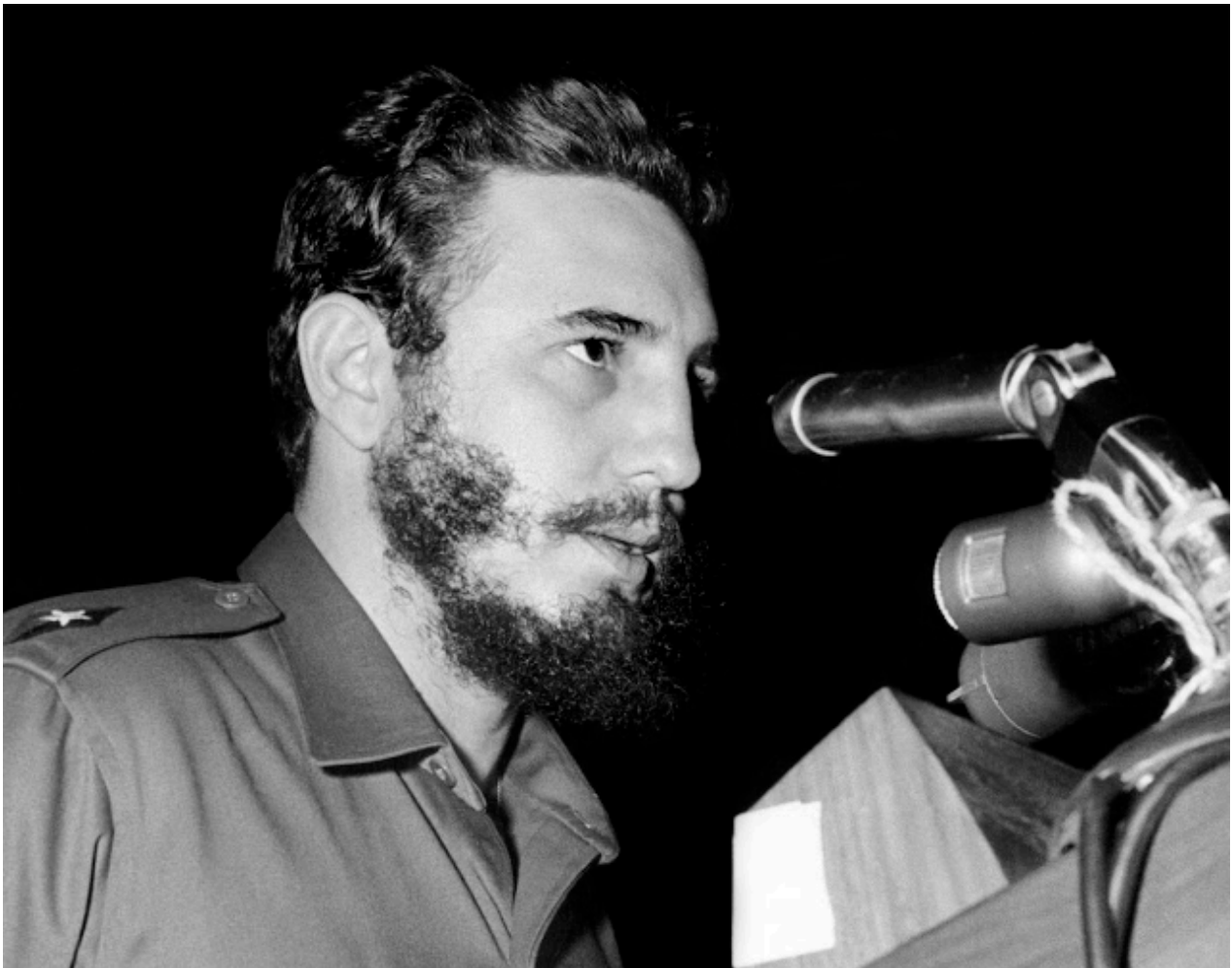
More than 600 assassination attempts

For example, the CIA planned hundreds of assassination attempts on El Comandante's life using poisons. In 1960, cigars carrying deadly toxins were gathered to be given to the lover of fine cigars, Fidel himself.

Later, an attempt was made to put poison in Castro's shoes by placing thallium salt in the soles. His diving suit as well, according to some reports, was once infected with lethal bacteria. But the man responsible for Castro's outfits changed his mind at the last moment and gave El Comandante a different, safe suit.

Fidel's lover, the CIA-recruit Marita Lorenz, was once complicit in an attempt to take his life. American intelligence gave her poisonous pills which she hid and dissolved in a jar of cream.

Fidel also managed to avoid being stabbed by a poisoned needle hidden in a ballpoint pen. One of the Cuban leader's political employees intended to stab him with a poison-tipped needle during a meeting with American President John F. Kennedy. But the attempt failed.



Plans were also hatched to spoil Castro's good reputation by getting him high on LSD during a live radio show. It was assumed that the drug would cloud the Cuban leader's mind so that he would begin to talk nonsense and disappoint audiences. But this plan also failed.

Such unthinkable assassination attempts were also featured in the computer games Call of Duty: Black Ops and The Godfather 2, whose levels included missions to eliminate Castro.

Books, articles, and social networks

Even after retiring and passing the baton to his brother Raul, Fidel Castro did not cease to surprise the public. He has retained a clear mind and publishes articles in the newspaper "Granma."

Around 6 years ago, El Comandante registered an account on Twitter with the aim of surpassing the popularity of Barack Obama and Benjamin Netanyahu's accounts. Castro's miniblog @reflexionfidel publishes his thoughts on current political events and is now subscribed to by nearly 500,000 people.

In 2010, Cuba released the first part of his memoirs, "The Strategic Victory." It is believed that he is now working on the second part of the book.

Translated from Russian by J. Arnoldski

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